765 twice a day, morning and evening, they go in procession, their [514] heads covered with caps made of white cloth. They spend the nights together, in a single hut if possible.

The wives of the deceased go out only when it is ab- [292] solutely necessary during the first moon after the death; they are dressed in white and wear a kind of white hood on their heads and sandals made of goatskin on their feet. At the end of the moon, at night and separately, they go to a sort of puri- [783] fication rite that takes place at the crossroads outside the village.

Up to the fortieth day there is a very gradual return to ordinary life. Then, and only then, the successor to the deceased is finally recognized and installed, as is shown in the chronicle of Ségou.

801 In closing, let us note how every ritual sequence rests 805 on periods of time whose real meaning must be sought in magic. The astral religion of the Semites in fact taught that on the third, seventh, and fortieth day after death the moon acts more powerful to destroy the body (1). Apparently some

1. See the meeting of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres of August 9, 1918, paper by Franz Cumont, "La commémoration des morts et l'astrologie [The Commemoration of the Dead and Astrology]," Journal Officiel (1918), p. 7224.

such beliefs must account for the Bambara rites planned precisely according to these numbers. This seems all the more likely since the Sudanese commonly believe that the fortieth day marks the separation of the flesh from the bones of buried corpses.

794 The sounds of the [263] trumpets to announce the meetings
825 imitate the cry of the animal (1).

[534]

1. This is true of the Dyara. In the brotherhood of that name, a cry like a roar is drawn from an instrument made as follows: the hollow trunk of a palm tree is covered at one end by a tightly stretched skin; a long thong or rope runs down inside the trunk from the center of the skin; the operator pulls the rope tight, then lets it slip through his hand by jerks, and having achieved a certain facility, he succeeds in producing a noise like a roar.

000 Can it be that the costumes made of bark strips, the strange masks, and the mimicry of the people who wear them are connected with mysteries which are now unknown to us, either because they have been adopted without understanding and thus deformed beyond recognition, or because they are the last vestiges of far older cults, today unfathomable since they no longer exist?

Did Egypt inspire these cults, as some people believe? Or rather was Egypt herself influenced originally by a pre-existent Black civilization whose last surviving traces she kept alive by altering them? This is an unlimited field for speculation.

794 Generally speaking, the cult is in abeyance on Monday
● 805 and Thursday of each week. The same days are holidays from communal work and are left to the "poor people" for their own profit. There must be some connection between these two facts, and it should further be noted that, as a result, the religious week is reduced to five days. A question naturally arises, therefore, as to whether the week as now observed is truly native. It seems likely that the week is an oriental contribution, more specifically Islamic. It could be a coincidence that Islam organized slavery, and when a seven-day week was adopted, two days were allotted to the gens de poëste, as used to be said IN FRANCE.

212 From the central core of creation four categories of signs have
812 emerged, 266 in all, which represent the complete signs of the world; they give color, form, and matter to things. In time these 266 signs came to head lists of an infinity of other signs encompassing all of creation.

"It is by these signs that man enters into possession of the greatest part of his domain, which is the universe. And in the measure that he does not know a sign, that he cannot analyze it, that is, possess it in its component parts, he finds certain sectors of the total knowledge of things closed to him." (1)

1. M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen, Signes graphiques soudanais [Sudanese Graphic Signs].

815 The Bambara, like the Dogon, represent the movement of the stars graphically as well as mathematically, and, in particular, the revolution of the sun around the earth, center of the cosmos. These movements are measured by a cylindrical granary that they use as gnomon (wati dyati dyiginye); it is a round structure of seko [plaited walling?] with a conical roof, constructed according to precise measurements. It rests on a small packed mound in the form of a square which has first been carefully measured and oriented. Twenty-two stones are buried in each angle of the square, and 22 more in the center. Three rows of four big stones are oriented east-west on the little hill: one row on the southern side, one to the north, and one in the middle. Small wooden beams are laid on these rows. Each part and each measurement has a symbolic meaning. The gnomon serves to determine the dates of the solstices and the equinoxes by the observation of its shadow on the ground. (2)

2. D. Zahan, "Un gnomon soudanais" [A Sudanese Gnomon], Africa, 1950.

●805 The diurnal and annual movements of the sun are represented
815 by a zigzag line, ⩘ . Certain variations in the form of the zigzag represent the procession of the equinoxes and the variable length of the days in summer and winter, ⩘ . Four angles represent the four cardinal points, and each of the lines that make up

805 815 the angles represents 90 days (the year, for the Bambara, is 360 days). The symbols are not merely mathematical; they form part of the daily life of the society. [18] The zigzags are a characteristic theme [531] in the decoration of pottery, weapons, tools, sanctuaries, and houses. One finds them in agricultural techniques and in ritual dance figures. The universal rhythms of the earth and sky echo through all the activities of man and society. (1) Finally, another series of 16 signs

212 [787]

1. Id., "Conception de l'écliptique chez les Dogons et les Bambara" [The Dogon and Bambara Conception of the Ecliptic]. [Ed., Africa, 1951.]

is habitually used in geomancy. It is interesting to note that these signs were used in a practical manner for correspondence. The Bambara chiefs used multiple combinations of them to send each other messages.

G. Local Diversities

197 Given the extent and the diversity of the regions where Bambara is spoken, it is no wonder one notices differences in pronunciation, and even in structure and vocabulary, from one province to another. At Kaarta the speech is not the same as at Ségou, and a Bambara of Ségou has trouble understanding a Bambara of Bougouni. This is due partly to the influence of other languages which are in contact with Bambara and which ultimately alter and modify it, and partly to the normal evolution of language within a group separated for centuries from its place of origin. It is interesting to note that in the Bougouni circle the conservatives in speech are the old men, while the women are the evolutionary element.

191 Traditionally, Ségou was considered the center for the most elegant Bambara speech. Before the conquest, children were sent to Ségou to learn the purest Bambara.